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INFORMANT: REV. PAUL BAILEY  
CONDUCTED BY: MARTHA NORKUNAS

DATE:

R = REV. PAUL  
M = MARTHA

LFP-MN-R021-R022

M: ...Saint Michael's Church in Lowell. Father Bailey, let's start by getting some of your background. If you could tell me what country your, whoever immigrated to the United States, what country they came from? Where they moved to? A little bit of your sort of family background.

R: Well I suppose as I look back we're probably five generations in this country from Ireland. Originally the family moved to Charlestown. I grew up in Alston, which is a section of Boston. My mother particularly didn't talk to much about the family because I think they were sheep stealers in Ireland.

M: Oh, sheep stealers? [Laughs]

R: I don't know much about them, but I know we've been at least five generations here in Boston, in Charlestown and then they moved out to different sections and so forth. I was Boston born, Boston educated uh, in High School, Jesuit High School, Seminary. Ordained a priest in 1958.

M: Is the Seminary in Boston also?

R: Saint John's in Brighton. Uh, was in the parish for a couple of half years. Was sent in to the school of Social Work at Boston College. I was in Social work for nineteen years as a therapist and as an administrator. I then became Pastor of Saint Michael's in 1979. Uh, I have worked in the Merrimack Valley for twenty years. Part of it being in Social Work and Catholic Charities, and then the parish.

M: So you had some familiarity with Lowell before you came here?

R: Well to the parish, yes. I had familiarity with Lowell because I was Director of Catholic Charities in Lowell, and Haverhill, and Lawrence also. So yes, I knew the area.

M: When you say director of Catholic Charities, what are the Catholic Charities?

R: Well there's multi function social service agencies. There was marriage counseling, adoptions, unwed pregnancies, placing children, hard to place children with Department of Youth Services in the state. Um, ran a camp up in Pelham, New Hampshire which is Saint Mary of the Pines, which is 55 years old now. So it's a multi function kind of thing, yeah. So.

M: So you're used to dealing with people with problems, difficulties emotional.

R: Yeah, I suppose so. Yeah.

M: Would you do counseling, one on one counseling?

R: Yeah, I was, my original training in social work was in psychotherapy. And then I went in to administration as you know, as a priest director, so.

M: Do most priest get that kind of psychological training?

R: No. I don't think so across the board, no.

M: I would think that would be pretty valuable.

R: Hm.

M: Do you know, go back to your family for a second, do you know why they immigrated from Ireland?

R: No, and I don't know the year? I'm presuming it was tracing back great grandfather to Charlestown. I presume that they came over you know, in the famine in '47, '47 to '50. That's just a guess. I don't know that. Because I can go back to 1860 of marriage records in Charlestown. I've got birth certificate and al that kind of thing. So before that I don't know. And as I say, my mother died eight years ago, who was ninety at the time was no help to me. She didn't talk about them.

M: It's funny, some families talk so much about the past, and others not a thing.

R: Well they were sheep stealers.

M: That's funny. And then father, how was it that you, did they invite you to become pastor? How does that work?

R: Uh, at the time I had kind of said that I had spent nineteen years of social work, and I went into the seminary to be a pastor. And this parish was opened at the time and they invited me to come here. So.

M: What, what do you do as pastor? What are your?

R: Where do you want me to begin.

M: Well I've got the time if you do?

R: What do I do?

M: Well why don't you tell me about your day? Like maybe you had a basic day, what that would be like?

R: That can vary from day to day. You think of Saint Michael's, which is a fairly active parish, you know, with about a hundred funerals a year. With about sixty weddings a year. With a hundred confirmations, with a hundred and fifty, hundred and twenty-five first communions. Just the sacramental program would keep you busy. This is a parish that in days gone by had you know, four curates and a pastor. And now the pastor and curate [loud noise cannot transcribe end on comment].

M: Why the cutdown?

R: Because of shortage of priests. Bottom line. So. So it's business as usual, you know. And we have the regular sacramental kinds of things that we have to do, plus you know, twenty-nine thousand other things. You know, uh, families with problems and so forth, you know, you deal with it. Uh, fortunately you know, people I think in Saint Michaels still feel you know, the need of priests, the need of parish. Some places don't feel that I don't think. You know, we can do without it. So that the demands are you know, are multi-faceted. Uh, and for me to say one, two, three, you know, I couldn't, I just (--)

M: Well when you talk about families, what kinds of needs do the families have for your services?

R: You know, in time of death, in time of Baptism. Just take the sacramental stuff. You know, it's there. Plus the on going kinds of things when there are family problems, marriage problems.

M: Will they come to you?

R: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. They (--)

M: Oh, they'll come and they'll say, "Father look, some things aren't going right."

R: Yeah, we got to do this. And you know, here's the situation. What do you think? You know, and then you look into the crystal ball and say, "I don't know."

M: Will they come together or singularly?

R: You name it. You know. We have a pretty good youth program in the parish, like in the basement of the rectory here, it's a drop in center. The kids come three nights a week here. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. So you know, we're dealing, at least making available a place where kids can talk.

M: In what, high school? Junior high?

R: Yeah, high school. It would be high school.

M: And then don't you have an active CYO?

R: That's it. That's it. The drop in center is for the CYO, yeah. Yeah.

M: Now would these be kids who are church goers?

R: Yeah, and not so too. But they have to you know, kind of go to certain things to be members of the CYO. You know, some ground rules. But they come and you know, we're getting kids that might not go to church that come to it, you know, but they have to do other things that, to be members of the CYO.

M: Oh, so they want to. So they do those things?

R: Yeah, yeah. [Unclear] I mean we have thirty-five to fifty kids every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights in the drop-in center during the year. It's closed during the summer, but they're there so.

M: And do you drop in from time to time?

R: Yeah, we drop in, right. [Chuckles]

M: And what about sort of general concerns of the parish? I mean you've obviously have a lot of experience in, in the Northeastern, in the Massachusetts area. Could you talk about the specific concerns of this parish?

R: One of the concerns is you know, Lowell has been a conduit for many groups coming into the community from various lands. And I think that there are new groups coming into the community. Cambodians, Vietnamese, you know, and it's hopefully trying to bring them into the community so that they won't be facing the same kind of things that some of the forebears of the people who'd been here in the parish, which is basically French, Irish, and Polish. You know, hopefully there's no signs up "Irish need not apply". So that's a concern, of you know, bringing people in.

M: Bringing them in?

R: Into part of the community? Being part of the community. Not saying, "oh those newcomers." You know, not feeling part of it. But bringing them in into you know the church and so forth.

M: What are your new groups?

R: Say, Cambodian basically here.

M: And here meaning?

R: Centraville. Centraville. Cambodian and some Vietnamese. Cambodian, Spanish speaking families basically I think on the other side of the River in um, Saint Patrick's parish. No, not too many, but there are several families of Cambodians that are right down the street in lower Centraville.

M: Yeah, I think I might have seen them just walking around, or. And how do you do that Father?

R: Well think two ways. Uh, you know, welcoming when they come to church, and also our Legion of Mary, which is three different groups in the parish of [unclear] that visit the parish, and visit families is like an ongoing kind of census of the parish. When they would visit you know, know on every door. And they'd you know, say, "you're welcomed to Saint Michael's, you know, come up."

M: To registered Catholics?

R: No. To anybody, they knock on every door. It's not registered Catholic. They knock on every door, and then to say, "we're here from Saint Michael's and you know, we're interested in you, and you know, you're welcomed." Sometimes it takes, sometimes it doesn't.

M: And these are volunteers from the parish?

R: Yeah.

M: Oh, how often do you do that?

R: What I'm saying, it's an ongoing kind of thing. They do it every week. You know, one week they might be in Centraville, one week they might be in Dracut, you know, it varies. But they, they segment the place. And so that you know, over a couple of years the whole place is covered, and it's continuing. [Loud noise in background] And then they'll say to me, "well there's a problem here, you know, I think you better go see them." Which I do. But it's a welcoming committee if you will.

M: Do they go to knew people, or all, all the people?

R: No, any, you know, they just do the whole place. It's (--) Right over on the river there's a new development. I don't know how many apartments in there? They went through the whole thing.

M: And what's the kind of response they get?

R: Over there, minimal number of Catholics. You know, like the doors that are knocked on, which is every door, those you know, who are there, who have responded you know, are coming here. You know, they're welcomed into the place, so.

M: And so they have, are they, well I guess a better way to put it is how are they received by the other parishioners? Are there some tensions with the new immigrants?

R: Um, I haven't experienced it. I haven't, regarding tension. Um, uh, if it's there it's non verbal, but I have not experience it. So.

M: Do the new immigrants have special concerns of their own?

R: Um, basic concern of wanting to belong. You know, and that's about probably what we're offering at this point. Yes, you can belong. You don't have to go through a lot of grief. So.

M: Do you offer physical support to. Blankets, housing, things like that?

R: Okay. We've, through our Saint Vincent de Paul Society, which is basically a lay persons organization within the church. Um, yeah, physical you know, pay gas bills, pay food orders and everything. We have a thrift shop in the basement of the convent that is clothes. You can go and get clothes there. And those who want to pay something, you know, they might pay a buck for an overcoat, but they pay something. One of the concerns that we had several years ago um, housing. First thing this is on a main drag here, you know. Um, on Rte 38, you can say well I need a place to stay tonight. (M: Tonight?) Yeah, tonight. So where are you going to put them. Well we used to put them up in a few places that I wouldn't even send my worst enemy too. Uh, so I've been involved in the founding of a shelter for homeless, which is the House of Hope, which is in operation on Merrimack Street. And it really is taking some of the burden off of coming to the door. People are getting housing in Lowell. And there's, "The House of Hope" really deals with families, individuals, nobody's who's you know, on alcohol or drugs, or psychotic. There is another shelter which opened about six months after we did at the "House of Hope", the "Middlesex Shelter", which would take care of people with that [unclear], because you can't mix them up. You can't put somebody who's on alcohol with a three year old kid. So it seems at least initially that the things are in place for shelters. However this month of July at the "House of Hope" we had to refuse thirty-seven families. Now this is July. This is not wintertime. When you think when it's

cold people want shelter, but thirty-seven, we didn't have room.

M: Families come through?

R: Yeah.

M: Who, or what are families that have no home?

R: They've been evicted. They've been burned out by fires, or they're just passing through.

M: Are these going to be new immigrants, Asians?

R: No. Well yeah, not heavily. New immigrants would be there, but not, (M: not the majority?) Not the majority, no. No. People passing through. Lowell is a conduit as I say for you know, they're going to Maine, or they're going to Rhode Island, they come through Lowell somehow.

M: It sounds like migrant workers?

R: Well yeah, but it isn't. I hear what you're saying, but yeah, it's a passing place.

M: Yeah, see, now this is a side of Lowell I don't know and I don't see.

R: Yeah, yeah. But the two places are in place, which is important that Lowell has done this.

M: Is it just Saint Michael's that runs the House of Hope?

R: No, no. It is, no. It is, it is the Church of Lowell, the City of Lowell, that had been involved in both of the foundation of these places. So the city has looked at the foundation of this and has been supportive of it, and the church has been.

M: This church you mean?

R: The Catholic Church basically. However you know, the House of Hope is an Ecumenical kind of thing, and both are. But it was, it was really how the House of Hope started was through Bishop Darcy who was the Regional Bishop of Lowell. Called a meeting to address the issue of homeless in Lowell. And I opened my mouth and inserted foot. I became the Chairman of the committee, and then I became the president/treasurer sort of things. And that's how it started.

M: And how many people can the shelter hold?

R: Oh, we admit to twenty-five. We'll shove in a few more and you know,.

M: And is there a rule they can't stay more than one night, or ten nights, or [unclear]?

R: Basically ours is, it's a three night stay, which can be renewed. And the idea is then to try to get them into their own homes. Get apartments for them. There's an advocacy program with it. You know, that tries to get them into their own places.

M: Can you?

R: Yeah. We've had pretty good success with that.

M: And what part of the city do they go to usually?

R: Uh, pretty much around Merrimack Street I think.

M: In the Acre?

R: Yeah, the Acre. Yeah. But they, they are getting places to stay, so. Now the other need, you know, as I say, the Middlesex Shelter on Middlesex Street. It really is a catch-all. I mean many of the people that go there are not looking for shelter other than that night, but it's being addressed. They're not sleeping under the bridge at Bridge Street. You know, so. There are two different, two different (--)

M: Do you screen them? Is that how you separate them out.

R: Yeah, like with the House of Hope, it has to be referral say from the church or you know, or welfare, wherever. You know, somebody comes in to me off the street and say, "I need a place to stay." You know, if they're on alcohol I'd say, I'd go to House of Hope and I'd call them. If they're not, I'd say, you know, I'd call the House of Hope and get them you know, if there's an opening that night and then they go over. So there's yeah, there's a screening, yeah.

M: And you probably can tell pretty much, can't you?

R: Yeah, as a matter of fact.

M: Well we talked to Officer Paquette, you know car #2?

R: All right. Yeah.

M: And he said, you know what (--)

R: Oh Butch Paquette, yeah, yeah, yeah.

M: Butch Paquette, yeah, he said (R: Adrian), Adrian, yeah. He said you know it's hard, I used to be able to tell what kind of drug people were on, but with the cocaine he said it's really hard. And I thought, he's like a pharmacist practically.



R: Yeah.

M: Father I just want to ask you one more question about the House of Hope. If you could characterize any more clearly for me age or ethnicity, or anything more about the people that are homeless in Lowell.

R: I really think you should interview Sister Jean, who is the Director of the place for that. Uh, it is um, from where I come from when I've been over there you know, and seeing it, you know, it's all ages. Ethnicity is all kinds. The only predominance I would say, that there are younger families you know, with two or three kids. Whatever the ethnicity, that's across the board you know, but, it seems there's a number of younger families.

M: And they lose their homes how? Or did they ever have homes?

R: They've been evicted. There's been fires. And they haven't had homes. They might be transients. It's across the board. There's no [makes sound]

M: Are there many people that just pass through Lowell? You mentioned it?

R: Yeah. I think in my twenty years in Lowell, both in charities and here, there are a lot of people who pass through, you know.

M: Why do they come here?

R: Uh, just as a stopping place. You know they're, you know they give you stories of they're on their way to Providence, Rhode Island, they're on their way to Maine. You name it. (M: For work?) Yeah, that's what they'd be saying. But certainly since Lowell in 1975, since '75 on, when Lowell has been rejuvenated, I give '75 as the year, not as the benchmark, but '75 on. You know, people can see Lowell you know, as an up and coming city, or rejuvenated city, and they say that's the place to go, passing through.

M: Oh, because of all this redevelopment?

R: Sure. Sure. I see they identify with that, sure.

M: So they think they'll get something from you? (R: Yeah) I wonder what?

R: Yeah, I don't know, but that's you know, the fantasy part.

M: And what, can you um, talk about Centerville a little for me? Subdivide it geographically of kinds of people, or class, ethnicity, problem areas here and there. I mean sometimes you can talk about a particular section as a particular [unclear].

R: Well I think when the parish was established in 1883, and the Archbishop of Boston,

John Williams at that time had found a parish on the North bank of the river which was Centraville and all of Dracut. All of Dracut. There are now three parishes in Dracut and one down the street, a French parish in Lowell. So there's five in that whole area that he said, form the parish Saint Michaels, which was established here. Uh, there's they call lower Centraville, which is on the other side of Bridge Street. Um, there's Christian Hill. Um, there's Dracut. There was the Navy Yard up in Dracut section where they made blankets in World War I for the Navy. That's why they call it the Navy Yard. And Christian Hill, I'm not sure of this. They say Christian, it's called Christian Hill, names for a guy who's last name was Christian, who was not very Christian. I don't know. There's all sorts of stories with how that established, you know? And they refer also to Centraville as Jersey.

M: Is that a recent, or is that long term?

R: It's long term, yeah. Jersey. Um, I don't know the origin of it. I have a couple of suspicions. One is that Jersey would be like New Jersey off of New York. The other one would be from the Jersey Islands off of England. And the Jersey Island, it would, you know, one of the things that the Jersey Islands are noted for is that they could work together and help one another. I'd like to think of it as the Jersey Islands, as oppose to New Jersey.

M: Is it like an island this area?

R: It really isn't, you know. It might have been for bridges and all this. You know they used to have, the bridge was a you know, a walk bridge, or a draw bridge. not a draw bridge, but they had a boat going back and forth over the bridge way back. And it really was isolated, you know, because this was (--) You know, you think of down here on Bridge Street, you think you're in downtown New York or something. But you go up on the top of the hill, and you go up to Dracut, it's farmlands. It's a variety within this one parish. You know, you got, you know, you got urban, you got a city, and you have rural within the parish.

M: Does your parish extend? Why don't you tell me where it extends?

R: Okay, well, well, okay. As it is now, as I told you, it was Centraville, which is a part of Lowell, and all of Dracut. It now, with the parishes that have been established in the last, well a number of years, we still go up through Dracut right up to the Pelham line. Okay? And then we, we fan out. Take '38 as your main drag, which would go up to the Pelham line. And we fan out in Dracut to the right and left of it. And all of Centraville.

M: Was it always so?

R: No. What I'm saying is, originally it was Centraville and all of Dracut.

M: So it was even more.

R: Yeah, there are now three parishes in Dracut.

M: Because it, and please correct me if this a mistaken conception, but the idea that I had of Saint Michael's historically was as an Irish parish, very much a neighborhood church.

R: Okay. All right. Now, when it was established it was definitely Irish. But in 1904, because in lower Centerville there were a number of French speaking families, Saint Louis the France was, a parish down the street was established, which is a diocesan parish as opposed to religious order, like the Oblates. Okay? that was established. And in Dracut there were many Polish speaking families who used to go with the Holy Trinity on High Street, which is the Polish Church. We can look at the marriage register particularly. Up to World War II and thereafter, or up to World War II, and right after World War II, you can read the register, and all Irish basically. After World War II we had French marrying Irish, Polish marrying French, Polish marrying Irish in this church. So it, World War II was the stepping off stone as opposed to Irish.

M: That's the date you could put your finger on?

R: Yeah, just from records.

M: So when you said before that you have this big geographic area, it would have been the Irish from this area prior to World War II pretty much?

R: Okay. You go back to 1883 and 1883 when we were established, it was the whole area. 1814 Saint Mary's in Collinsville was established as a mission. It was finally established as a parish in 1909. Saint Louis de France was 1904, which was French speaking. Then Saint Theresa's in Dracut, which is further up on Lakeview Avenue, was 1927. The final mission of Saint Michael's in Kenwood, Saint Francis was established as a parish in 1963 when Monsignor Cannon died. That's the present structure of the place. Uh, as you raise the question, I don't know where the Polish people went in days gone by. I just don't recall the date of the founding of Saint, of the Holy Trinity. You know, I could find that for you, but I just don't have it off hand. So the French and the Irish were 1904, Saint Louie. And the Irish. I just forget when Holy Trinity was established.

M: But any rate in the early days you didn't have many French or Poles here at Saint Michaels?

R: No, not as I say, until World War II is when they started.

M: So they went somewhere else.

R: Well the French went down to Louis de France from 1904. And I just forget when the Holy Trinity was established. I could find that for you. I can give you that date.

M: Were most of the people that lived right around the church Irish?

R: Oh sure, yeah. But you think of you know, Louis de France is just down the street here. I mean you know, there's not even a mile, and that was established in 1904. So in lower Centerville there was a good French Congregation.

M: Yeah, this, I'm going to [tape is turned off]

SIDE I ENDS

SIDE II BEGINS.

M: Uh, so 1883 for Saint Michael's, 1904 for Holy Trinity and Saint Louis? (R: Yeah) And this would have been an Irish neighborhood east of Bridge Street, or was it west? Where were the Irish?

R: Um, the French basically were in lower Centerville, which is you know, West of Bridge Street, but there were Irish there also. [Loud noise of cars riding by] And then East would be Irish. Dracut, Polish, and Irish too, but I mean.

M: So would you say that the ethnic groups made little rings around their church where they lived?

R: Yeah, except for the Polish where they had to go to the Holy Trinity which is over the river.

M: Then they started Saint Casimir's.

R: That's not Roman church. That's a Polish National Church, which is a schismatic church. In, in the middle, last part of the 1800's, in Pennsylvania where there were a number of Polish Catholics they felt that the church in the United States was runned by too many Irishmen, and they didn't have Irish priest. They, they broke from Rome and founded the Polish National Church. As opposed to like Holy Trinity, which is a Roman Catholic in, over [unclear] So Saint Casimir's is a schismatic church as far as the Roman Church is concerned.

M: Are there any other such churches in Lowell?

R: No, that's the only one I know.

M: What about this, the ethnic groups? Would the French and Irish, or Polish mix much in their neighborhoods before World War II?

R: Um, I don't know. I would tend to think yes, but certainly after World War II there were marriages.

M: Why Father?

R: I think you know, World War II opened up in some ways, you know, people are saying you know, you just don't marry Irish, you just don't marry French, you know, it's the person you marry. It had a tremendous cultural impact on the community, which is good.

M: Yeah, and then (--)

R: In those days it was, a French marrying an Irish, or and Irish marrying Polish, we called them mix marriages. Normally a mixed marriage would be a Protestant marrying a Catholic, or whatever, but these were two Catholics, but they were different cultures.

M: Would there have been antagonistic feelings on the part of the priest in the churches?

R: Oh yeah. Oh I don't know. I don't know that. I don't know that. I know in families, "what are you doing marrying an Irishman?" Why are you marrying somebody Polish? You know, there were cultural things. I know in my own family in 1950, my cousin married an Italian girl from Medford. Well her father was so concerned, "what are you doing marrying an Irishman?" And it's been the best marriage, you know, thirty-seven years of it now. You know, but her father was an Irishman.

M: Yeah, the Lithuanian priest before Father Zarumskas (sp?) wouldn't marry my parents because my mother was Irish, and he, my father(--)

R: Who's, who was that before John?

M: I think they called him Father Joe, but I don't remember his last name.

R: I don't know who he was.

M: Father Zarumskas (sp?) I know now and like, but the priest before him apparently was difficult.

R: See John has been there seventeen years now, seventeen or eighteen year, so he's, I don't know who would be here before him.

M: And he wouldn't marry because my mother wasn't Lithuanian.

R: Yeah, I'm sure that operated you know, the same way whether with priest or within families. It's a garden variety type thing, you know. So.

M: What about uh, this is, might sound like a funny question to you, but we find a lot when we travel and visit people in maybe different areas of the country, that although they're officially Roman Catholic, because they've been in this one area for a long time they've developed some of their own practices that another church in a different part of their country just wouldn't do. Sort of regional beliefs, regional practices maybe, uh certain things that I don't know, like they've, they've localized their, their religion.

R: Can you be specific?

M: Well I'm trying to think of some examples to give you. One thing I did notice down here when I went downtown is that, that I don't notice say for example in other parts of the country, there's a big, people are very involved in icons, in medals, statues, religious statues, religious medals, and there's a great belief in some of the Saints that I understood that Vatican II you know, asked that people not be so devoted to. Don't have so many Saint Christopher medals in your car, things like this.

R: And you think that (--)

M: It seem here that people are still very much involved in, very devoted to a number of saints.

R: What you're talking about it seems is prior to Vatican II, and Vatican II didn't throw out Saint Christopher, it was the church after that, but Saint Philomena and a few of the others. But one of the things that existed certainly before Vatican II was that religion was very much identified with culture. And culture then tying in with what we called popular piety. Popular piety would be devotion to saints, devotions to missions, devotion to Novenas and everything like that. Where the mass was one thing, of course it was in Latin, the Vatican II is saying you know, the mass, the liturgy is the central focus, focus, not central, that's redundant, the focus of our belief in Jesus. All of these other things are side dishes. Popular piety. We had in many ways you know, said, you know, said, or not said, but in practice devotion to saints, devotion to Novenas, the missions, because you know, more predominant than the mass, mainly because the mass was in Latin if you will. So uh, you've seen the last twenty years, you know, the liturgy, the mass is the key thing. All of these others as I say are side dishes. Many people still are holding on to the side dishes, because that's where religion and culture come together and that's where they're at.

M: Would you say that differs by ethnic group, or am I searching here?

R: Uh, I'd say it's across the board, and I can say you know, I can think of some Irish who still hold on to it. I can think of some French who hold on to it. I can think of some French who hold on to it. I can think of some Polish who are holding on. So across the board. It's the level of where people are coming from, [unclear] religion.

M: One think that confuses me is that the liturgy was in Latin until 1960, (R: '64 basically) '64. Then why was there a need to start a French and a Polish Church if their liturgy was also in Latin?

R: Well they, with the National Church as they were called, the Polish, Okay. Distinction. As I mentioned about the Polish National Catholic, that's, that's different. But they would call parishes in days gone by, territorial parish and national parishes. Territorial would be Saint Michaels. It covers a geographical area. Within Saint

Michael's, you know, down the street is Saint Louie, a National because of French. And liturgy would be in French in days gone by.

M: Not Latin?

R: Yeah, they'd have it in French, and that was okay. Now when the [unclear] English for us, most of the French churches around here don't have masses in French anymore. And many, many of them, because unfortunately families have given up you now, even talking French or Polish or [unclear] in their family. You know, and the kid doesn't have the chance to learn the second language, which I think is great. You know, so.

M: So that the Diocese recognize the need, not only for the neighborhood parish, but for well you called them national parishes.

R: Yeah, the ethnic [unclear], oh sure, sure, sure. Like Holy Trinity over in High Street is the Polish church. This would be French here, Saint Louise de France, Notre Dame de Lourdes, Saint Jean Baptiste, Jeanne D'Arc, all be National parishes.

M: What about today, shouldn't there be an Hispanic parish?

R: Sure.

M: Is there?

R: Uh, there is, there is a Spanish community that has met and being served by the priest of Sacred Heart in Lowell I think it is now. And there is, there is an attempt to have a church. You know, there is um, as I understand it to have their own free standing place. You know, so.

M: But that would probably not be in Centerville because you said there aren't many Hispanics here.

R: I, you know, it's the Acre, South Lowell, it's really aren't too many Spanish people here in Centerville.

M: Father, when you said in World War II that [comment unclear-loud noise in background] I know you weren't here, but (--)

R: Yeah, I was in grammar school.

M: Yeah. Would it be impossible for you to imagine how the concerns of the church changed when the ethnic groups began to mix?

R: Um, read the book. That's kind of a [drastinary?]) thing. How I can imagine, no I can't. But I mean that issue is dealt with in the book. The History of the Parish.

M: One other thing I wanted to ask you is, we're looking a little bit at I don't want to call them social clubs, associations, and some of the people mention again and again are the associations connected with the church. Can you just tell me something about the different groups you have? Holy Name?

R: Oh those. Yeah. There are cultural groups in the parish. You know, the East End Club, the Jersey Associates and that kind of thing. But you know, Holy Name Society, Sodality, uh, (--)

M: Holy Name Society is for men?

R: Yeah, Sodality is basically for women.

M: And there's a Holy Name Sodality?

R: No, Holy Name Society. (M: Okay) And a Sodality of Mary.

M: That's for the women?

R: Yeah. Again those were the kinds of groups that dealt with popular piety before Vatican II and the emphasis being on the liturgy, the mass. Those were side dishes. But there would be the thing that would attract people. What we're really trying to say since Vatican II, you know, the liturgy, the mass is your main dish.

M: And what do those, those groups still exist though, don't they?

R: Yeah.

M: But the Church doesn't push them?

R: They exist and they're operative, but on a minuscule basis.

M: What about the Knights of Columbus?

R: That is not identified with the parish. That is, the Knights of Columbus was established in 1887, New Haven, Connecticut for insurance for basically Irish in those days. You know, it was kind of an insurance plan.

M: Health Insurance? Death Insurance?

R: Yeah, both, yeah, that's how [unclear]. And that is, that is non parochial kind of thing. Now the Knights in Lowell are trying to rejuvenate and I don't know to what success. But (--)

M: Does it have a connection with the church?



R: Well with church, yes, but not parish as such. That's what I'm saying. It's non parochial. It is a Catholic Organization that would have a Bishop as their liaison with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. And actually the Knights in recent years, apart from the local groups you know, which you don't see too much of, the Knights have really come up with a lot of buckaroos for things Catholic. Like something like last year was something like, they come up with for charities, 24 million dollars. Uh, each year now they fund a meeting in Dallas Texas for Bishops throughout the country on some [unclear-loud noise] so forth, you know, but they front the whole thing the Bishops. You know, nationally they're doing some good things. But you think of locally you know, it's a club house and whatever, you know, but nationally they come up with the big bucks and they're doing some good things. They've been very much in the abortion business too, in terms of supporting you know, anti amendments or whatever. But they've come up with I just saw this recently as I say, I think it was 24mil last year. (M: really?) Yeah.  
[Comment unclear]

M: Do you encourage groups within the church? I mean people to come together under some kind of social way like the CYO, but for adults?

R: Yeah, well you know, we've uh, uh, we have adult education programs that we've have several years now, where people come together for lectures and so forth. And uh,

M: At the church?

R: Yeah, Yeah. Sure.

M: What kind of lectures?

R: Uh, what did we have last year? We had two series. Three.

M: Historical [unclear]?

R: Yeah, and current issues and so forth. Like Father Brien here came last May and talked about the Bishops [unclear] on the economy and nuclear war. And he had very much to do with writing those documents. Now this Fall Father Cunningham is coming from the seminary to talk about "what it means to be a member of the Catholic Church today", and it's basically on sacraments and relating to our CCD program and you know, it's an updating kind of thing, you know. So.

M: Oh, because you have an ongoing Christian Doctrine Program. (R: Oh yeah) Is that after school? (R: Yeah) How many days a week? k

R: Well let's see, Monday night for the seventh and eighth grade. Thursday night for the high school. Wednesday from one to six. So three days. No, on Saturday morning. No wait a minute. Saturday, Saturday, there's one Monday night, Wednesday afternoon, Thursday night and Saturday morning. And it takes one to twelve basically.

M: And people volunteer to teach?

R: Yes, and we have a good program of that that the Diocese has provided a Master teacher program, and we have, most of our teachers have gone through that, which is a thirty week thing, 90 hours that they go to Boston to. It's like a whole year from September to May. Most of our teachers have been accredited by them. (M: Wow!) Yeah, the parish pays for it and everything, but it's a good thing. You know, it's well invested.

M: And you had a steady core of teachers then.

R: Basically yeah, yeah. Yeah. They stay around, yeah.

M: I guess after that training. Do you have any projects that you'd trying to do with the church now in the parish?

R: Well projects.

M: Sort of ongoing goals maybe?

R: Yeah. One thing is you know, the school will be a hundred years old in '89. And one of the projects would be you know, to keep the school viable and funded. You know, with salaries and you want to keep the school you know, as a private school in the sense of a parish school, but you know, and make it available to people. But you know, tuitions are just going up. You know, all the expenses, and to pay the teachers who are qualified. And we've got a good, we've got a good staff, good staff.

M: Permanent teachers.

R: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So that you know, I suppose probably my, is keep that school going and make it viable, you know, so.

M: Do you get a full enrollment?

R: Yeah. And we have, we have you know, three hundred, whatever, it takes thirty to a room. Thirty-two a room. And then we have a kindergarten and a pre-kindergarten too.

M: For working mothers?

R: Yeah.

M: As a working mother I appreciate that.

R: Any other kinds of goals?

M: That's enough. [chuckles]

R: I'm just keeping the place going.

M: Is there a declining interest in the church?

R: I suppose after Vatican II and after the document on [unclear] on birth control, you know, many people don't come to church. You know. Uh, I think though here people come, we have a healthy place. You know, and an enthusiastic place. They're good people.

M: And how much latitude do you allow for people who don't follow all the doctrines of the church?

R: Uh, how much latitude do I allow? Well you know, I don't see myself as a police officer. I try to meet people where they're coming from.

M: So if someone say, does these birth control methods but believes in the other parts of the church, is there a conflict there?

R: I'd have to know where they're coming from. You know, and make an individual judgment, you know? Understand where they're coming from. You know, saying here's the teaching of the church, but where are you coming from, you know?

M: Just in terms of individual expression, I believe sometimes I'm driving around the town and there's, people have statues of the Virgin Mary on their lawns. I don't notice much else, but often statues of the Virgin in like a seashell case.

R: You mean the lady of the bathtub. [M: laughs] Or Saint Mary of the half shell. They're bathtubs they got up there.

M: I didn't know that was a bathtub. [Laughing]

R: Look at it, look closely. It's a bathtub.

M: It is? Is there anything, is there a reason for that?

R: No, it just makes nice shelter, you know?

M: Is that, why do they put the statue on their lawn like that?

R: You know, I don't know. Other than to say that it's you know, the popular piety you know. You know, I'm a Catholic or something. I don't know.

M: Sort of a demonstration of their belief?

R: Yeah, probably, yeah.

M: And that would still go along with so many uhm, well most people have a crucifix, but they also have, what I've seen so far, they also have a Madonna often on their walls.

R: Yeah.

M: And the Sacred Heart very often, a picture. Is that something that the church encourages? Or is that people just pick up on their own?

R: It's more of a carryover from days gone by. Again popular piety.

M: Can you explain one more time what you mean by popular piety?

R: Okay. The official prayer of the church is the mass. All of cult of saints, all of novenas, the missions, are all popular. You know, they have the approval of the church, but the mass is the center. Now what we did maybe when we had Latin masses was sell the popular piety, the cult of the saints, missions, novenas and everything else as opposed to the liturgy.

M: Oh I see. Because people maybe didn't understand the liturgy so they understood the saints?

R: They understood it. Exactly.

M: This is something else that they say in Anthropology, and I'm not saying this to be antagonistic. I'm just throwing this out to you. I've also heard that people can't except the idea of a monotheistic world. And this is the reason for the saints. That they have to have, they have a need for polytheism. So the saints represented in fact many gods to satisfy that need.

R: No, you know, I don't as I understand saints, they're used as models to get you know, they're used role models if you will. You know, this guy did it this way, you know, and maybe you can follow him or her as a way of working out your Christianity. I don't uh, (--)

M: But people pray to the saint, don't they?

R: Yeah, but they pray to the saint not as the God, but as a way to get to God if you will. It's an intermediary. It's not a, it's not a God (--) I don't, [few words unclear].

M: And they have pictures of saints as though they were important.

R: Yeah, sure.

M: Is it in a god like (--)

R: Yeah, but they're side dishes I think, you know.

M: Do you think that people recognize that? Realize that they are intermediaries?

R: Okay. Then, then we'll come back to popular piety. If people you now, put saints before God, then they got the cart before the horse. I'm sure you know, that could exist. But I think for the most part seeing, you know, even Mary, seeing her as the intermediary to Jesus, you know. And I think that one of the things that you know, has happened in fact to, is that uh, there's a change of emphasis on what's the central part and what isn't the central part of belief.

M: But you have to accommodate yourselves. Every local parish certainly has to accommodate yourself to the local culture.

R: Sure sure sure. Sure, sure.

M: Because I've heard of churches in say Latin America that, I don't want to say bend the rules, but I'll use the word accommodate again, themselves to the local practices.

R: Sure, sure, sure. You know, like I say, they're happening.

M: Another thing I wanted to ask you about Father was when people ask a favor, doesn't make, ask a favor, make a novena, the favor is granted, there's almost a superstitious quality to some requests where they have to perform certain, they'll make little agreements in their prayers. If I do this that and that, then you'll do this that and that. Does that border on superstitious?

R: As you present it, yes it would. As you present it. You know, you don't bargain with God. He said, look it, you're saved you know, and all of that stuff is trying to say, you know, I want to be reassured that I'm saved. You know, we're not going to know until we die that there is eternal life. But we spend our life believing in that. That's what faith is about. And so we, you know, if people barter if you will, you know, make the nine first Fridays. You know, that you know, you just don't deal with that. I mean I know it exists, but you now, this television church, they play on people's worst fears. If you believe in Jesus you will be healthy, wealthy and wise as long as you send your money in. That's nonsense. We have been saved by Jesus' [unclear] act of dying and rising. That's what we place our faith in. And we're not going to know that until we cross over the [unclear]. And you know, if Jesus, you know, if that isn't enough then we don't have faith enough. We're trying to say, oh jeeze, I'll say five Hail Mary's and my God I'll be. You know, you got these chain letters, God bless us you know, if you don't. Chain letters come out, you know, you say you know, X amount of prayers but you have to send this letter to nine more people, and if you don't the last guy that didn't do it died within ten days. Nonsense. Nonsense. That's, that's superstition, yeah. And if you want, if you want to call faith superstition, or you know, you want think of it as (--) Be my guess, because that isn't what faith is.

M: What about the lighting of the candle in the church?

R: Lighting a candle in church you know, is not very, you know (--) The symbol of the candle is, "Jesus is the light of the world". Like the Easter candle we light. "Jesus has risen, there's light. He came to bring light out of darkness." That's the symbol of the candle. Well people you know, you know, we don't have candles in our church, but you know, the lighting of the vigil candle, if it is a belief in the light that Jesus saved us, fine, but if it just becomes a superstition it doesn't make any sense.

M: Why don't you have candles in your church?

R: Fire. We don't want people burning the place up. You know the church in many ways, we have a seven and nine o'clock mass in the morning. We close the upper church and the Chapel is open during the day for people to visit, and we don't even have the sanctuary, a candle saying that Jesus is present. And he is present there. Because of fire. We don't want people burning up.

M: Does it, is that disturbing not to be able to have the candles?

R: Sure, but I'm not going to have it, you know, because I don't want any fires. You know, there's enough. [Whispers some comment]

M: You know it's funny, in Chicago I used to stop by the church in my lunch hour sometimes. And there would be all of these street people in the back of the church talking and motioning wildly. And I guess it was an open place for them to go.

R: Yeah, yeah.

M: And it was a little odd for anybody else, because it wasn't very peaceful. But then I thought well, it's suppose to be for the homeless too.

R: Yeah, sure.

M: Okay. Um, I guess that's about, I didn't want to reiterate what was in the book.

R: Yeah, read the book!

M: I wanted to ask you some of your own impressions of the church and practices people have. And that's why I said to you, we wanted to tape, I know you said it would be better to wait until the Fall, but tape a mass and then maybe have you explain to us what it means.

R: Yeah. I would really, I think you know, [unclear], because I'd rather wait until the Fall for that.

M: Yeah, we can certainly do that. As I say, I won't be here but they'll be other people.

R: Yeah, sure, sure.

M: Okay.

END OF TAPE.